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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3102

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Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer a simple but important amendment.

My amendment, offered with Representative Jackson Lee from Houston, would add another means by which facilities may demonstrate compliance with the Financial Responsibility provisions of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

The amendment enables two or more companies to meet individual financial responsibility requirements by pooling resources or obtaining joint insurance coverage. Such arrangements would avoid redundant coverage, reduce insurance costs, and enhance access to insurance.

In the event of a liability incident, any party to such an arrangement would have access to the full coverage amount. Provisions would be made in a joint insurance plan for automatic reinstatement, by the parties, of the original coverage amount.

This amendment does not substitute or change current provisions for meeting financial responsibility. Rather, it simply adds another method for meeting financial responsibility requirements. There is no reduction in protection of the public interest, no reduction in protection for the environment.

Mr. Chairman, ever since I arrived in Congress, I made it my mission to fight for the little guys – the companies whose names you don't see in television commercials, but that provide jobs for millions of Americans and produce so much of our nation's domestic energy. You find a lot of those companies around my hometown of Hobbs, New Mexico. And you find a lot of those hardworking companies operating in the Gulf of Mexico.

Having independent oil and gas producers providing American energy in the Gulf of Mexico is critical to moving away from foreign oil. If we don't have independent companies operating in the Gulf, then we'd be left with only the largest integrated corporations offshore. The problem there is that the Big 5 are only interested in producing the biggest plays with the biggest potential payoffs. It's the independent companies that are going in and producing American energy that would not get produced otherwise.

This amendment simply allows smaller independent companies the flexibility they need to meet Financial Responsibility requirements. I ask for broad, bipartisan support.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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